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A DINNER BY MISTAKE.

'ONLY one poun'-ten a week, sir, and no extras; and I may say you won't find such cheap airy lodgings anywhere else in the place; not to speak of the sea-view;' and the bustling landlady threw open the door of the tiny sitting-room with an air which would have become a Belgravian lackey. It certainly was a cozy, sunny little apartment, with just such a view of the sea, and of nothing else whatsoever, as is the delight of an inland heart. I was revolving, in my mind how to make terms on one most important point, when she again broke forth: 'I can assure you, sir, I could have let these same rooms again and again in the last two days, if I had not given my promise to Mrs Johnson that she should have them next Friday fortnight, and I would never go from my word, sir—never! though this month is our harvest, and it's hard for me to have the rooms standing empty. As I told my niece only yesterday, I won't let forward again, not to please anybody, for it don't answer, and it worrits me out of my life. And I'm sure, sir, if you like to come for the fortnight, I'll do my utmost to make you comfortable; and I always have given satisfaction; and you could not get nicer rooms nowhere.'

'No,' said I, taking advantage of her pause for breath; 'these are very nice. I—I suppose you don't object to smoking?'

The good woman's face assumed a severe expression, though I detected a comical twinkle in her eye. 'Why, sir, we always do say—but if it's only a cigar, and not one of them nasty pipes'—

I smiled: 'To tell the truth, it generally is a pipe.'

'Is it now? Well, sir, if you please, we won't say anything about it now. We have a lady-lodger upstairs, and if she should complain, I can but say that it is against my rules, and that I'll mention it to you. And so, sir, if you please, I'll go now, and see to your portmanteau being taken up;' and thereupon she vanished, leaving me in sole possession.

I threw my bag and rug on to the sofa, pushed a

slippery horsehair arm-chair up to the window, and sat down to rest and inhale the sea-breezes with a certain satisfaction at being in harbour. As I before remarked, the prospect was in the strictest sense of the words a sea-view. Far away to east and west stretched the blue ocean; and beside it, I could see only a steep grass-bank just beneath my window, with a broad shingly path running at its base, evidently designed for an esplanade, though no human form was visible thereon. Away to the right, I just caught a glimpse of shelving beach, dotted with fishermen's boats; and of a long wooden jetty, with half-a-dozen figures slowly pacing from end to end, while the dismal screeching of a brass band told of an attempt at music more ambitious than successful. It was not a lively look-out for a solitary man, and I half wished myself back in my mother's comfortable house at Brompton. However, I was in for it now; and I could but try how far a fortnight of open air and exercise would recruit my wasted strength. I had been reading really hard at Oxford through the last term, and my very unusual industry had been followed by a languor and weariness, which so awakened my dear mother's solicitude, that she never rested till she had persuaded Dr Busby to prescribe sea-air and a total separation from my books. She could not come with me, as she longed to do, kind soul! but she packed my properties, and gave endless instructions as to diet, all of which I had forgotten before I had accomplished the first mile of my journey. I don't know why I came to that out-of-the-way watering-place, except that I was too languid to have a will of my own, or to care for the noisy life of country-houses full of sportsmen. So, on the following morning, behold me in gray travelling suit and wide-awake, strolling along the beach, watching the pretty bathers as they dipped their heads under water, and then reappeared, shaking the dripping tresses from their eyes. Then there were the fishermen, brawny, bare-legged Goliaths, setting forth on their day's toil, and launching their boats with such shouts and cries as, to the uninitiated, might indicate some direful calamity. The beach was

alive now, for the whole visiting population, such as it was, seemed to have turned out this bright September morning, and were scattered about, sketching, working, and chattering. I scanned each group, envying them their merry laughter and gay talk, and half hoping to recognise some familiar face among those lazy lounging youths and sun-burned damsels; but my quest was fruitless, and I pursued my lonely way apart.

Really, though, the little place improved upon acquaintance. There were fine bold cliffs, just precipitous enough to make a scramble to the top almost irresistible; there were long stretches of yellow sand and shallow pools glittering in the sunlight; and there was a breeze coming straight from the north pole, which quickened my blood, and brought the colour into my yellow cheeks even as I drank it in. I bathed, I walked, I climbed, I made friends with the boatmen, and got them to take me out in their fishing-smacks; but still, with returning vigour, I began to crave not a little for some converse with more congenial spirits than these honest tars and my loquacious landlady. I inscribed my name on the big board at the library; I did all that man could do to make my existence known, but nearly a week passed away, and still my fellow-creatures held aloof. I had been out for the whole of one windy afternoon tossing on the waves, watching the lobster-fishing, and came in at sunset tolerably drenched with spray, and with a terrific appetite. As I opened the door of my little sitting-room, I beheld—most welcome sight—the white dinner-cloth, and lying upon it a card—a large, highly-glazed, most unmistakable visiting-card. With eager curiosity, I snatched it up, but curiosity changed to amazement when I read the name, 'Sir Philip Hetherton, Grantham Park.' Sir Philip Hetherton! Why, in the name of all that's incomprehensible, should he call on me? I had never even heard his name; I knew no more of him than of the man in the moon. Could he be some country magnate who made it a duty to cultivate the acquaintance of every visitor to Linbeach? If so, he must have a hard time of it, even in this little unfrequented region. My impatience could not be restrained till Mrs Plumb's natural arrival with the chops; and an energetic pull at the bell brought her at once courtesying and smiling.

'I suppose,' began I, holding the card with assumed carelessness between my finger and thumb—'I suppose this gentleman, Sir Philip Hetherton, called here to-day?'

'O yes, sir, this afternoon; not an hour ago.'

'He inquired for me?'

'Yes, sir; he asked particularly for young Mr Olifant, and said he was very sorry to miss you. He's a very pleasant-spoken gentleman, is Sir Philip.'

'Ah, I see. Is he often in Linbeach? Does he know many people living in the place?'

'Well, I don't think he has many friends here, sir; at least, I never understood so; but he owns some of the houses in the town, and he is very kind to the poor. No one is ever turned away empty-handed from his door, and I've a right to say so, sir, for my brother's widow lives in one of the lodges at Grantham. He put her into it when her husband was drowned at sea, and he's been a good friend to her ever since.'

All this was not what I wanted to find out, but

I had learned by experience that Mrs Plumb's tongue must have its swing. I now mildly brought her back to the point: 'Does he see anything of the visitors?'

'Not to my knowledge, sir. He sometimes rides in of an afternoon, for Grantham is only four miles from Linbeach; but I don't think he ever stays long.'

So it was not apparently an eccentric instance of universal friendliness, but a special mark of honour paid to me. It grew more and more mysterious. However, there was nothing to be gained by pumping Mrs Plumb further; and as I was discreetly minded to keep my own counsel, I dismissed her. But meditating long and deeply over my solitary dinner, I came at length to the unwelcome conclusion, that Sir Philip Hetherton must have been labouring under some strange delusion, and that I should see and hear no more of him. I was rather in the habit of priding myself on my judgment and discrimination; but in this instance, they were certainly at fault, for within three days, I met him face to face. I was strolling slowly along one of the shady country lanes which led inland between cornfields and hedgerows, when I encountered a portly, gray-haired gentleman, mounted on an iron-gray cob, and trotting soberly towards Linbeach. He surveyed me so inquisitively out of his merry blue eyes, that the thought crossed me, could this be the veritable Sir Philip? I smiled at my own vivid imagination; but I must confess that before I had proceeded another half-mile, I faced round, and returned to Linbeach far more briskly than I had left it. I had scarcely stepped into Mrs Plumb's passage, when that personage herself met me open-mouthed, with a pencil-note in her hand. 'O Mr Olifant, I wish you had come in rather sooner. Sir Philip has been here again, and as he could not see you, he wrote this note, for he had not time to wait. I was quite vexed that it should happen so.'

Evidently the good woman was fully impressed with the dignity of the event, and not a little flattered at the honour paid to her lodger. I opened the note, and it contained—O marvel of marvels!—an invitation to dinner for the following day, coupled with many warm expressions of regard for my family, and regrets at having been hitherto unable to see me.

'I told Sir Philip that I thought you had only gone down to the beach, sir; but he laughed, and said he should not know you if he met you. I suppose you don't know him, do you, sir?' Mrs Plumb added insinuatingly.

'No,' said I; thinking within myself that the baronet need not have been quite so communicative. However, this confession of his, at any rate, threw some light upon the subject, and suggested a solution. He might have known my father or mother. Of course, indeed, he must have known them, or somebody belonging to me. His own apparent confidence began to infect me, and I wrote off an elaborate and gracefully-worded acceptance; and then sat down to my pipe, and a complacent contemplation of all the benefits that might accrue to me through his most praiseworthy cordiality. 'After all,' I reflected, 'tis no matter where one goes; friends are sure to turn up everywhere; and thereon arose visions of partridge-shooting in the dewy mornings, to be followed by pleasant little dinners with my host and a bevy of lovely daughters.

But on the morrow certain misgivings revisited me, and I came to the conclusion that it would only be the civil thing to ride over to Grantham in the afternoon, and get through the first introductions and explanations before appearing there as a guest. Accordingly, I hired a long-legged, broken-winded hack, the only one to be got for love or money, and set forth upon my way. It was a fruitless journey; the fatal 'Not at home' greeted my ears, and I could only drop a card, turn the Roman nose of my gallant steed towards home, and resign myself to my fate.

Seven o'clock was the hour named for dinner, and I had intended to be particularly punctual, but misfortunes crowded thick upon me. The first white tie that came to hand was a miserable failure. My favourite curl would not be adjusted becomingly upon my brow; and the wretched donkey-boy who had solemnly promised to bring the basket-carriage punctually to the door, did not appear till ten minutes after time. Last of all, when I had descended, 'got up' to perfection, and was on the point of starting, I discovered that I was minus gloves, and the little maid-of-all-work had to be sent fleeing off to the corner shop, where haberdashery and grocery were picturesquely combined. So it fell out that, despite hard driving, it was several minutes past the hour when we drew up under the portico at Grantham. I had no time to compose my nerves or prepare my opening address. A gorgeously-arrayed flunkie appeared at the hall-door; a solemn butler, behind, waved me on to the guidance of another beplashed and bew powdered individual; and before I fully realised my position, I stood in a brilliantly-lighted drawing-room, full of people, and heard my name proclaimed in stentorian tones. The next moment, the florid gentleman whom I had encountered on the previous day, came forward with outstretched hands and a beaming face, and a perfect torrent of welcomes burst upon me.

'Glad to see you at last, Mr Olifant, very glad to see you; I began to think there was a fate against our meeting. Let me introduce you. Lady Hetherton—my daughter—my son Fred. Come this way, this way.'

And I was hurried along helpless as an infant in the jovial baronet's hands. How could I—I appeal to any reasonable being—how could I stand stock-still, and under the eyes of all that company, cross-examine my host as to the why and wherefore of his hospitality? It will be owned, I think, that in what afterwards occurred I was not wholly to blame. Lady Hetherton was a quiet well-bred woman, with a mild face and soft voice; she greeted me with a certain sleepy warmth, and after a few placid commonplace, resumed her conversation with the elderly lady by her side, and left me to the care of her son, a bright frank young Harrovian, with whom I speedily made friends. Really it was very pleasant to drop in this way into the centre of a genial circle, and I found my spirits rising fast as we talked together, *con amore*, of cricket, boating, hunting. A fresh arrival, however, soon disturbed the party, and directly afterwards dinner was announced. Sir Philip, who had been busily engaged in welcoming the last-comers, led off a stately dame upon his arm, and we followed in procession, a demure young daughter of the house being assigned to me. We were slowly making our way round the dining-room,

when, just as we passed the end of the table, Sir Philip turned and laid his hand upon my shoulder.

'I have scarcely had time for a word yet,' he said; 'but how are they all in Yorkshire?'

I don't know what answer I gave; some one from behind begged leave to pass, and I was borne on, utterly bewildered. Yorkshire! what had I to do with Yorkshire? And then, all at once, the appalling truth burst on me like a thunderclap—I was the wrong man! Yes; now I recalled a certain Captain Olifant, whom I had once met at a mess-dinner, and who, as I had then heard, belonged to an old Yorkshire family. We could count no sort of kinship with them; but here I was, for some inexplicable reason, assumed as one of them, perhaps as the eldest son and heir of their broad acres, and regaled accordingly. My situation was sufficiently unpleasant, and in the first impulse of dismay, I made a dash at a central seat where I might be as far as possible from both host and hostess. But my manœuvre failed. Lady Hetherton's soft tones were all too audible as she said: 'Mr Olifant, perhaps you will come up here; the post of honour; and of danger too, in my case; but there was no help for it, and I went. As I unfolded my napkin, striving hard for a cool and easy demeanour, I mentally surveyed my position, and decided on my tactics. I could not and would not there and then declare myself an embodied mistake; I must trust to chance and my own wits to carry me through the evening, and leave my explanations for another season. Alas! my trials full soon began. We had hardly been seated three minutes, when Lady Hetherton turned to me.

'We were so very glad you were able to come to-night, Mr Olifant; Sir Philip had quite set his heart upon seeing you here. It is such a great pleasure to him to revive an old friendship; and he was saying that he had almost lost sight of your family.'

I murmured something not very coherent about distance and active life.

'Ah, yes, country gentlemen have so much to do that they really are greatly tied at home. I think, though, that I once had the pleasure of meeting a sister of yours in town—Margaret her name was, and she was suffering from some affection of the spine. I hope she is better now?'

'Much better, thank you.' And then, in the faint hope of turning the conversation, I asked if they were often in town.

'Not so often as I should wish. Sir Philip has a great dislike to London; but I always enjoy it, for one meets everybody there. By the by, Mr Olifant, the Forde's must be near neighbours of yours. I am sure I have heard them speak of Calveston.'

I did not dare to say they were not, lest inquiries should follow which might betray my extreme ignorance of Yorkshire geography in general, and the locality of Calveston in particular; so I chose the lesser peril, and answered cheerfully: 'O yes, quite near—within an easy walk of us.'

'What charming people they are!' said Lady Hetherton, growing almost enthusiastic. 'The two eldest girls were staying here last spring, and we all lost our hearts to them, they were so bright and pleasant; and Katie, too, is growing so very pretty. She is not out yet, is she?'

'No; I fancy she is to be presented next year,'

I responded, reflecting that while I was about it, I might as well do it thoroughly. 'She ought to make a sensation.'

'Ah, then,' said Lady Hetherton eagerly, 'you agree with me about her beauty.'

'Oh, entirely. I expect she will be quite the belle of our country balls.' And then, in the same breath, I turned to the shy Miss Hetherton beside me, and startled her by an abrupt inquiry whether she liked balls. She must have thought, at anyrate, that I liked talking, for her timid, orthodox reply was scarcely uttered, before I plied her with fresh questions, and deluged her with a flood of varied eloquence. Races, archery, croquet, Switzerland, Paris, Garibaldi, the American War, Muller's capture, and Tennyson's new poem, all played their part in turn. For why? Was I not aware that Lady Hetherton's conversation with the solemn old archdeacon opposite flagged from time to time, and that, at every lull, she looked towards me, as though concocting fresh means of torture. But I gained the day; and at length, with secret exultation, watched the ladies slowly defiling from the room. Poor innocent! I little knew what was impending. The last voluminous skirt had scarcely disappeared, when Sir Philip left his chair, and advancing up the table, glass in hand, seated himself in his wife's place at my elbow. I tried to believe that he might intend to devote himself to the archdeacon, but that good gentleman was more than half inclined to nod, and my left-hand neighbour was deep in a geological discussion; so I sat on, spell-bound, like the sparrow beneath the awful shadow of the hawk. Certainly, there was not much outward resemblance between that bird of prey and Sir Philip's comely, smiling visage, as he leaned forward, and said cheerily: 'Well, now, I want to hear all about them.'

It was not an encouraging beginning for me, but I had committed myself with Lady Hetherton too far for a retreat. Like Cortes, I had burned my ships. Before I had framed my answer, the baronet proceeded: 'I don't know any of you young ones, but your father and I were fast friends once upon a time. Many's the lark we've had together at Harrow, ay, and at Oxford too; for he was a wild-spirited fellow then, was Harry Olifant, though, I daresay, he has settled down into a sober country squire long ago.'

It was plain that Sir Philip liked to hear himself talk, and my courage revived.

'Why, yes,' I said; 'years and cares do work great changes in most men; I daresay you would hardly know him now.'

'I daresay not. But he is well, and as good a shot as in the old Oxford days.'

'Just as good. He is never happier than among his turnips.' And then I shuddered at my own audacity, as I pictured my veritable parent, a hard-worked barrister, long since dead, and with about as much notion of firing a gun as one of his own briefs.

'Quite right, quite right,' exclaimed Sir Philip energetically; 'and we can find you some fair sport here, my boy, though the birds are wild this year. Come over as often as you like while you are at Linbeach; or, better still, come and stay here.'

I thanked him, and explained that I was staying at Linbeach for the sea-air, and that I must be in town in a few days.

'I'm sorry for that. We ought to have found you out sooner; but I only chanced to see your name at the library last Friday. And so you are at Merton?'

'Yes, I'm at Merton,' said I, feeling it quite refreshing to speak the truth.

'Ah, I'm glad your father's stuck to the old college; you could not be at a better one. That boy of mine is wild for soldiering, or I should have sent him there.'

The mystery stood revealed. I had recorded my name on the visitors' board as H. Olifant, Merton College, Oxford; and by a strange coincidence, Sir Philip's former friend had belonged to the same college, and owned the same initial. The coincidence was indeed so complete, that it had evidently never dawned upon the baronet that I could be other than the son of his old chum. He sat now sipping his wine, with almost a sad expression on his honest face.

'Ah, my lad,' he said presently, 'when you come to my age, you'll look back to your old college and your old friends as I do now. But what was I going to ask you? Oh, I remember. Have you seen any of the Fordes lately?'

I glanced round despairingly at the geologists, but they were lost to everything except blue lias and old red sandstone, and there was no hope of effecting a diversion in that quarter.

'Well, no—not very lately,' I responded slowly, as though trying to recall the exact date when I last had that felicity. 'To tell the truth, I don't go down into those parts so often as I ought to do.'

'There's a family for you!' Sir Philip went on triumphantly; 'how well they are doing. That young George Fôrde will distinguish himself one of these days, or I'm much mistaken; and Willie, too—do you know whether he has passed for Woolwich yet?'

I could not say that I did, but the good baronet's confidence in Fôrde genius was as satisfactory as certainty.

'He's sure to pass, quite sure; never knew such clever lads; and as for beauty—that little Katie' — But here the slumbering archdeacon came to my aid by waking up with a terrific start and a loud 'Eh!—what! time to join the ladies.'

There was a general stir, and I contrived to make my escape to the drawing-room. If I could only have escaped altogether; but it was not yet half-past nine. The tall footmen and severe butler were lounging in the hall, and I felt convinced that if I pleaded illness, Sir Philip would lay violent hands on me, and insist on my spending the night there. After all, the worst was over, and in the crowded drawing-room, I might with slight dexterity avoid all shoals and quicksands. So I ensconced myself in a low chair, guarded by a big table on one side, and on the other by a comfortable motherly-looking woman in crimson satin, to whom I made myself agreeable. We got on very well together, and I breathed and chatted freely in the delightful persuasion that she at least knew no more of the Fordes than I did. But my malignant star was in the ascendant. I was in the midst of a glowing description of the charms of a reading-party at the Lakes, when Sir Philip again assailed me: 'Well, Mrs Sullivan,' he said, addressing my companion, 'have you been asking after your little favourite?'

'My little favourite?' repeated Mrs Sullivan inquiringly.

She did not know who he meant, but I did; I knew quite well.

'Katie Forde, I mean; the little black-eyed girl who used to go into such ecstasies over your roses and ferns—you have not forgotten her yet, have you?'

No, unluckily for me, Mrs Sullivan had not forgotten her. I was charged with a string of the fond unmeaning messages which ladies love to exchange; and it was only by emphatically declaring that I should not be in Yorkshire for many months, that I escaped being made the bearer of sundry curious roots and bulbs to the fair Katharine.

But Sir Philip soon interrupted us: 'There's a cousin of yours in the next room, Mr Olifant,' he said, evidently thinking that he was making a most agreeable announcement: 'she would like to see you, if you will let me take you to her.'

I heard and trembled. A cousin. Oh, the Fordes were nothing to this! Why did people have cousins; and why, O why, should every imaginable evil befall me on this disastrous evening! Such were my agonised reflections, while with unwilling steps I followed my host to execution. He led me to a young lady who was serenely examining some prints. 'I have brought him to you, Miss Hunter; here's your cousin, Mr Olifant.'

She looked at me, but there was no recognition in her eyes. How could there be, indeed, when we had never met before! What would she do next? What she *did* do was to hold out her hand with a good-humoured smile, and at the same time Sir Philip observed complacently: 'You don't know one another, you know.' Not know one another; of course we didn't; but I could have hugged him for telling me so; and in the joy of my reprieve, I devoted myself readily to my supposed cousin, a bright, pleasant girl, happily as benighted regarding her real relatives as I was about my imaginary ones. The minutes slipped fast away, the hands of the clock pointed at ten, the guests were beginning to depart, and I was congratulating myself that the ordeal was safely passed, when, happening to turn my head, I saw Sir Philip once more advancing upon me, holding in his hand a photograph book. My doom was sealed! My relentless persecutor was resolved to expose me, and with diabolical craft, had planned the certain means. Horrible visions of public disgrace, forcible ejection, nay, even of the pump itself, floated before my dizzy brain, while on he came nearer and ever nearer. 'There!' he exclaimed, stopping just in front of me, and holding out the ill-omened book—'There! you can tell me who that is, can't you?'

It was a baby—a baby of a year old, sitting on a cushion, with a rattle in its hand, and it was of course unlike any creature I had ever beheld. 'Hm, haw,' murmured I, contemplating it in utter desperation; 'children are so much alike that really—but—as a brilliant idea suddenly flashed on me: 'surely it must be a Forde!'

'Of course it is,' and Sir Philip clapped me on the back in a transport of delight. 'I thought you would recognise it. Capital! isn't it? The little thing must be exactly like its mother; and I fancy I see a look of Willie in it too.'

I could endure no more. Another such victory would be almost worse than a defeat; and while 'my cousin' was rhapsodising over the infantine charms so touchingly portrayed, I started up, took

an abrupt farewell of my host, and despite his vehement remonstrances, went off in search of Lady Hetherton, and beat a successful retreat. As I stepped out into the portico, the pony-trap which I had ordered drove up to the door, and jumping in, I rattled away towards Linbeach, exhausted in body and mind, yet relieved to feel that each succeeding moment found me further and further from the precincts of Grantham. Not till I was snugly seated in the arm-chair in Mrs Plumb's parlour, watching the blue smoke-wreaths wafted up from my best beloved pipe—not till then could I believe that I was thoroughly safe, and begin to review calmly the events of the evening. And now arose the very embarrassing inquiry: What was next to be done? Sir Philip's parting words had been an energetic exhortation to come over and shoot, the next day, or, in fact, whenever I pleased. 'We can't give you the grouse of your native moors,' he said as a final thrust, 'but we can find you some partridges, I hope;' and I had agreed with a hypocritical smile, while internally resolving that no mortal power should take me to Grantham again. Of one thing there could be no doubt—an explanation was due to the kind-hearted baronet, and it must be given. Of course, I might have stolen off from Linbeach still undiscovered, but I dismissed the notion instantly. I had gone far enough already—too far, Sir Philip might not unnaturally think. No; I must write to him, and it had best be done at once. 'Heigh-ho,' I sighed, as I rummaged out ink and paper, and sat down to the great work; 'so ends my solitary friendship at Linbeach.' It took me a long time to concoct the epistle, but it was accomplished at last. In terms which I would fain hope were melting and persuasive, I described my birth and parentage, related how I had only discovered my mistaken identity after my arrival at Grantham, and made a full apology for having then, in my embarrassment, perpetuated the delusion. I wound up by the following eloquent and dignified words: 'Of course, I can have no claim whatever to continue an acquaintance so formed, and I can only tender my grateful thanks for the warm hospitality of which I have accidentally been the recipient.' The letter was sealed and sent, and I was left to speculate how it might be received. Would Sir Philip vouchsafe a reply, or would he treat me with silent contempt? I could fancy him capable of a very tolerable degree of anger, in spite of his *bonhomie*, and I blushed up to my brows when I pictured quiet Lady Hetherton recalling my remarks about Miss Katie Forde. The second day's post came in and brought me nothing; and now I began to be seized with a nervous dread of encountering any of the Grantham Park party by chance, and this dread grew so unpleasant that I determined to cut short my visit, and return to town at once. My resolution was no sooner made than acted on. I packed my portmanteau, settled accounts with Mrs Plumb, and went off to take my place by the next morning's coach. Coming hastily out of the booking-office in the dusk, I almost ran against somebody standing by the door. It was Sir Philip, and I stepped hastily back; but he recognised me at once, and held out his hand with a hearty laugh. 'Ah, Mr Olifant, is it you? I was on my way to your lodgings, so we'll walk together;' and not noticing my confusion, he linked his arm in mine, and continued: 'I got your letter last evening, when I

came in from a long day's shooting, and very much amazed I was, that I must own. I did not answer it at once, for I was half-dread with walking, and, besides, I always like talking better than writing. So now I have come to tell you that I think you've behaved like an honest man and a gentleman in writing that letter; and I'm very glad to have made your acquaintance, though you are not Harry Olifant's son. As for the mistake, why, 'twas my own fault for taking it for granted you must be the man I fancied you. My lady is just the least bit vexed that we should have made such geese of ourselves; but come over and shoot to-morrow, and we'll give you a quiet dinner and a bed in your own proper person; and she will be very glad to see you. Mind, I expect you.'

After all my resolutions, I did go to Grantham on the following day; and my dinner by mistake was the precursor of a most pleasant acquaintance, which became in time a warm and lasting friendship.

THE MAPLIN SANDS SCHEME.

SOME years ago, house-builders, and those who set them to work, thought of house-refuse only as an unpleasant affair which should be buried out of sight and out of mind as quietly and quickly as possible; and so they made dust-holes, and cess-pools, and ash-pits, the contents of which had to be carted away at intervals, no one asked whither. After a time, the doctors began to say: 'O fie; there are noisome odours from these receptacles, and the health of the people will suffer; let the refuse be taken away somehow, without being allowed to accumulate in the basement of the houses.' Good; but in what direction is it to go, and who is to pay the expense of finding an outlet? This led to the system of sewers—public drains belonging to a district, and constructed at the cost of the householders of that district.

The London sewers, brick-tunnels or culverts underground, are vast engineering contrivances, on which millions of money have been spent, and during the construction of which streets and roads have been broken up in a very annoying manner. But now comes the next stage. Where can the drainage go but into rivers; and how will this affect the water which the rivers have hitherto supplied us for drinking? Six years ago, it was estimated that *eighty million gallons* of sewage and impure water, containing four hundred tons' weight of solid matter, flowed into our poor Thames every day, within the limits of the metropolis! 'O fie,' again said the doctors and sanitary reformers; 'the Thames water will be unfit for drinking, unfit to look at, unpleasant to smell, if you pour into it the refuse from a population of three millions. If you must let the sewage flow into the Thames, make the mouths of the sewers twelve or fourteen miles below London Bridge, where the population is scant, the body of water great, and the tide strong.' And we have done this. We have spent nearly four millions sterling in the Main Drainage Scheme, which, when completed, will convey nearly the whole drainage of the metropolis to two outlets near Barking and near Erith. 'O fie,' once again say the critics—but this time they are chemists and agriculturists, not doctors and sanitary reformers—you should not throw into the river that which, if poured upon

the land, would make it fertile, and save the expense of purchasing guano.'

This is literally the course which matters have taken. The corporations of nearly all the principal towns in England, or the improvement commissioners for parishes and districts, are now considering—not how they may best carry off drainage into the rivers, but how they may render it available to the farmer for purposes of manure. The rivers of England are becoming worse and worse, owing in part to the very excellence and completeness of the systems of sewers constructed; our streets and houses are better, but our principal rivers are worse.

Experiments are being made in various quarters, to ascertain the best modes of applying sewage to arable and meadow land. Baron Liebig, the great German chemist, has lately addressed two letters to the Lord Mayor on this subject, in relation to the sewage of the metropolis. He says that eight hundred and twenty-eight tons of London sewage contain as much ammonia (a very important fertiliser) as one ton of Peruvian guano; and he calculates that all the sewage from our great city contains as much ammonia, phosphoric acid, and potash as would be worth from three to four million pounds, at present prices. Mr Bailey Denton, during a recent discussion at the Society of Arts, pointed out many valuable applications of sewage; and Mr Webber, a cheese-factor at Manchester, gave an account of a piece of grass-land which feeds seventeen cows. It used to yield two and a half cwt. of cheese per cow; but now that it is manured with sewage, the yield has risen to three and a half cwt.—an increase of forty per cent., or two to every five. There is a highly-successful experiment at Edinburgh, which is having so powerful an influence on the promoters of certain recent schemes, that we ought to know something of the real facts and conditions under which it is being conducted. The Craightinny meadows, near Edinburgh, producing a large annual rental, are popularly said to consist of nothing but sea-sand, blown up above high-water mark, and fertilised by the sewage of the city. Sand, however, is an indefinite term. In some districts, it means small fragments of limestone or chalk; in others, of silica or quartz; in others, of many different earthy and stony substances. The sand at Craightinny has produced luxuriant crops of grass for forty years; and some projectors have argued that, as this basis is sea-sand, it forms a most encouraging hint to us how to render other strips of sea-sand available; whereas others assert, that the fertility of the meadows is due to the fact, that the basis of the soil is *not* simply sea-sand. The liquid sewage from Edinburgh mostly flows round a piece of meadow-land favourably situated, and then takes a northerly course to Lochend farm, consisting of about eighty acres of loam or sand with trap-rock beneath. The owner of the farm irrigates part of it by a natural descent of the liquid sewage, and the rest by water-wheels and pumps. Then about two miles from Edinburgh, on the Leith and Portobello road, are meadows, about two hundred and fifty acres in extent, leased to another farmer. Some of the meadow-land is almost pure sand in its basis; but the greater portion varies from loam to clay. The sewage flows to this spot through an open channel, and is then distributed over it by irrigation. The

road-sweepings and the house-refuse alike find their way to the meadows, and bring with them a great variety of solid ingredients, useful in making up a fertile meadow-land; while the trap-rock beneath the sand supplies others. A portion of the sewage is allowed to settle in a kind of reservoir or tank; and the solid deposit is used as a fertiliser on the poorer section of the sand. The land near the shore was originally not worth five shillings an acre; it is now assessed at twenty-two pounds; and the higher portions rise in value to twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, and even forty pounds per acre. The reader can hardly realise the extent to which this Craigentenny meadow has been made matter for debate, in supplying *pros* and *cons* for the advocates of rival theories.

The subject generally is no less important than this—that, if the theories now eagerly advocated be correct, not only may we free our rivers from pollution, but we may actually obtain money from the farmers for that which has hitherto been considered an abominable nuisance. A tempting way of converting dirt into gold, certainly. The Metropolitan Board of Works have been besieged by applicants, who bring forward schemes for utilising the London sewage, the amount of which (according to some computers) is two hundred and sixty million tons (liquid tons probably) *per annum*. The plan which the Board most favour at the present time is the *Maplin Sands Scheme*, known technically as the 'Metropolitan Sewage and Essex Reclamation' Scheme.

Out near the mouth of the Thames, beyond Southend and Shoeburyness, are two shoals—Maplin Sands and Dengie Flats. A Company is to be formed for carrying to that distant spot all the sewage from the northern half of the metropolis, leaving the southern half to be dealt with by some other scheme. When the low-level sewer is completed, within or under the Thames embankment, all the northern sewage will flow to immense reservoirs at Barking. Instead of allowing it to flow into the river at that point, the Company propose to *purchase* it from the Metropolitan Board of Works (as trustees for the rate-payers of London, who are bearing the cost of constructing the vast Main Drainage works). The Company will form a trunk conduit or culvert from Barking Creek to the south-east corner of Essex, with two branches to the Maplin Sands and the Dengie Flats. The length will be sixty miles in all. The sewage will irrigate the district as it goes, if farmers like to pay for having branches laid on. Another Company, the 'South Essex Estuary and Reclamation,' are applying for powers to reclaim twenty thousand acres of the Maplin Sands and Dengie Flats (which are covered at high tide though bared at low), by enclosing them with a sea-wall, and shielding them perfectly from the sea. Should this be done, the Company first named propose to apply the remainder of their sewage to the reclaimed land, to render it fertile. They calculate that seven thousand tons of sewage per acre per annum may be thus applied. Liebig contends that arable or corn land is the only kind fitted to be manured with liquid sewage; but leading agricultural chemists believe that meadow or grass land is equally susceptible of benefit.

So far as the skill of the engineer is concerned, there is little doubt that this great scheme could be carried out. But how about the

result? Liebig, in his second letter to the Lord Mayor (dated February 21, 1865), declares emphatically that it will fail. We ought to know who is right and who wrong in this matter; for millions of money and the comfort of millions of persons are involved. Liebig says that sewage and sand will not make a soil fit either for arable or pasture, unless some other element be present. 'An acre of sand, even with the largest dressing of sewage, would not produce a single hundredweight of hay.' No land-plant can grow of itself in a medium like sand, to which the nourishing elements are applied in a state of solution. Sand absorbs certain salts from solutions; but, unlike plant-bearing soils, it does not decompose them. Plant-bearing soils act not only by accumulating and concentrating the nutritious elements of plants, but it renders them also fit for assimilation, 'and, like a sanitary police, preserves the health of the plant by removing everything detrimental to its life.' These useful duties are performed in virtue of the alumina, lime, and magnesia—one or more—contained in such soils, which lead to the well-known formations or earths of *clay*, *loam*, and *marl*. Now sand and sewage, Liebig contends, do not contain the elements necessary for forming clay, loam, or marl. The sewage from London, much as we talk about its offensiveness, is, when mixed with the vast amount of rain-water which naturally flows into the drains and sewers, very little less liquid than water itself; and though it contains many chemical elements, they collectively bear a very small proportion to the bulk and weight of the water. By far the larger percentage of the sewage would percolate the Maplin Sand without enriching it; but even if the whole of it were retained, the mixture would still be wanting in certain indispensable earths; and consequently 'the Maplin Sands could not in any length of time be converted into meadows.'

Liebig pours out chemistry and ridicule alike upon the unlucky heads of the promoters of the Maplin Sand Scheme. 'It is most surprising,' he says, 'that in a country like England, where the most experienced and ablest engineers are not above having their schemes for any new construction tested by means of a model, so that it may be submitted to the desired proof—it is, I say, surprising that a scheme like that of Messrs Napier and Hope, in which the fortunes of so many would be involved, could find supporters before even one attempt had been made to grow grass in a single flower-pot filled with Maplin Sand, and manured with fermented London sewage. Had a trial been made, it would have been found that in sand near the shore, containing, as it does, clay, plants will thrive; but that in fine sand they would die before the third leaf had been formed. The whole scheme is evidently not based, as it ought to be, on an exact and profound knowledge of the conditions of success necessary for such an undertaking.' The projectors say: 'Let us do as they do at Craigentenny;' Liebig says: 'Don't.' They say: 'The conditions are similar;' he says: 'No, they are not.' They say: 'Because the Craigentenny meadows are worth from twenty-two to forty pounds per acre, and because the growing season is a month longer in Essex than in the colder climate of Edinburgh, therefore we shall succeed even better, and shall be able to pay fifteen or twenty per cent. dividend to our shareholders.' Liebig

denies the conclusion because he denies the premises. The sand at Maplin is *not* like that at Craigentenny. The projectors liken the action of sand to that of flannel in a familiar way of growing mustard and cress; sand is only the medium through which the fertilising liquid reaches the seed, and is wholly infertile itself. The distinguished chemist denies this in the strongest possible form, and marvels how Englishmen can jump to so unscientific a conclusion. The projectors, rightly admitting that Maplin Sands are pure sand, appear to forget (he says) that the Craigentenny sand has such an admixture of clay, lime, and other earths, as to lead to the formation of really good loam; and that it is upon a loamy soil that the liquid sewage operates. 'It is in vain to think of transforming the Maplin Sands into a fertile soil producing luxuriant vegetation; as, in order to do so, more than two millions of tons of clay would be necessary to form the requisite layer of soil one inch in thickness. The project is most strange. It is in the fullest sense of the word baseless; for the land to be experimented upon does not as yet exist, being covered at high tide by the sea. All the calculations, therefore, as to crops, returns, and percentage of capital, are absolutely fabulous. It appears to me like a soap-bubble, glistening with bright colours, but inside hollow and empty. There is not the slightest doubt that every penny expended in this frivolous undertaking would irretrievably be lost. The carrying out of this scheme would not only be a squandering of an enormous amount of money, but before long, would also be looked on as a national calamity.' This is strong language, certainly. Baron Liebig has always contended that the soil has a *right* to those constituents which town sewage contains, in order to supply that which is necessary for the building up of a plant; and now he contends, in addition, that mere sand is not a soil at all, in this sense of the term, and that valuable sewage would be wholly wasted by being distributed upon and in it.

If the Maplin Sands contained clay and lime as well as sand, or if any scheme could be developed for appropriating such soil elsewhere, then Liebig concurs most heartily in the opinion that sewage manure would be a most valuable agent. 'There is no reason to believe that the English farmer is less acute than the Scotch; and if he had to dispose of a sufficient quantity of sewage on his fields, he would certainly not grudge the expenses for applying it in the same way as it is applied at Craigentenny. If a Company led a stream of sewage to any part of his farm he liked, with such a force as would dispense with steam or water power, so that he could distribute it over his ground in any way that he wished, he would most certainly be willing to pay that Company for the sewage the sums which he would otherwise expend for his machines. If his soil is not merely sand, but loam and sand or clay, he would then reckon with almost mathematical certainty on crops of grass or hay equalling those of the Edinburgh meadows; and when he has in this way convinced himself of the worth sewage has for him, he will furthermore be quite willing to pay the price for the fertilising matters in sewage which he pays for at present in guano.' And then there is another matter with which our sense of odour is concerned. 'The farmer will

also learn how groundless are his fears about the nuisance which prejudice attaches to sewage, and how wonderfully air and soil act together to destroy all its noxious qualities. Stagnant sewage and running sewage are very different things; that is, air and soil together get rid of most of the noxious gases.*

Liebig's letter has had great weight with the corporation of London. They differ from the Metropolitan Board of Works as to the merits of the Maplin Sands Scheme; and the House of Commons, influenced by this and other circumstances, has submitted to a Select Committee a searching inquiry into the merits of the matter, before it allows the Bill of the Company to advance to a third reading. How long the inquiry will last, no one can say; but until the Report is presented, our London sewage will continue to flow into the Thames at Crossness and Barking.

Meanwhile, another fight is being carried on, with a view to clear *all* our rivers of sewage. A Bill has just been brought into parliament for 'Facilitating the more Useful Application of Town Sewage in Great Britain and Ireland.' The sewage of any district is to be declared the property of the local sewer authority of that district—be it a Municipal Corporation, an Improvement Commission, a Sewer Commission, a Board of Health, or a local governing body of any other kind. The sewage is that which actually flows through the public sewers, and also such house and stable refuse as a householder may choose to deliver up to the local authority. Any person occupying land, through or near which sewage is running to waste, may apply such sewage to irrigate it under certain stipulations. The local sewer authority may acquire possession, in a legal way, of any waste lands, sand-banks, or mud-banks necessary for the distribution of the sewage of the district, and roads or ways of access to such spots. Such purchase, as it might involve objections on the part of various persons along the line of route, must first be approved by the Secretary of State, and then be sanctioned by a special act of parliament. The local sewer authority may make agreements with landowners, farmers, and others, as to what works shall be constructed for distributing any portions of the sewage of the district. In short, this measure contemplates the treatment of town sewage as a nuisance for rivers, and a treasure for farms. The two bills—the 'Metropolitan Sewage and Essex Reclamation Bill,' and the Bill just briefly noticed—are both at the present time under consideration of parliament.

Mr Bailey Denton tells the new companies and projectors that they must not irrigate low and undrained land, like the Essex marshes, with liquid sewage. 'At least nine-tenths of their extent must be under-drained before they can be profitably laid out for irrigation; and I may add as a fact susceptible of proof, that to irrigate the marshes of any low-lying valley is to increase its unhealthiness; though that may be greatly mitigated by under-draining. I do not lay stress upon

* This may be true so far as it goes, but who shall define the obnoxious powers of the gases that are left? to some noses (*crede experto*) the stench arising from fields thus enriched is hateful to the last degree; if all the country is to be inundated by liquid sewage, it is absolutely necessary that Parliament should compel its deodorisation before use.—Editor of 'C. J.'

the increased evil of irrigating with sewage instead of water; as it must be manifest to every one that miasma, which is due to the deleterious matter evolved with water under the influence of the atmosphere, is more likely to arise from the putrid matters of the London sewers, than from the clearer waters which are generally used for irrigation.' Dr Spencer Cobbold has thrown out a hint that billions of eggs of certain minute *entozoa*, which are now carried off to the sea by the rivers into which sewers flow, may possibly be transferred to our cornfields and hayfields, if the new sewage-manure schemes be acted upon. Therefore, what with Baron Liebig and the sand, Mr Denton and the marsh miasma, and Dr Cobbold and the *entozoa*, there are a good many knotty points to be settled before these large and important schemes can be thoroughly well tested. And they are worth settling, for the subject is one of vast importance to all of us.

LADY FLAVIA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LOED LYNN'S WIFE.'

CHAPTER XXXI.—THE LION IN HIS DEN.

THE old Château des Roches had never looked more sombre and sad than on that December night when the sleuth-hounds of Justice were let slip against its inmates. The gloomy garden, with its tall trees and overgrowth of shrubs, lay in irregular patches of black and white beneath the pale evening light. The stars shone frostily out between the rifts in the clouds, but there was no moon. The snow covered the earth like a shroud; the northern breeze was piercingly cold; the brooks were all frozen over, and there was ice on the Seine. The steep roof of the old château, the gray tower of the dovecot, the ruinous out-buildings, bore a load of unsullied snow.

The *char-à-banc*, with its living load, was the first to reach the bridge at the end of the village street of Grèsnèz-Vignoble. It was on this bridge, two days earlier, that Brand Royston had lingered so long, watching for signs of the coming storm. The storm had come now. It had rolled up, dark and lowering as a heavy bank of thunder-fraught clouds, and soon the tempest was to break forth in its might. By this time, at every station of the police throughout Northern France the *signallement* of Brand Royston was in the hands of the agents of government, and escape, accidents apart, was impossible.

The smithy, a few yards off, was open, and in full work. The bellows roared, the hammer tinkled on the glowing iron as it was forged into horse-shoes, and the sparks went in showers of flaky yellow and spangled red, hissing and eddying out into the night. There was the usual group of idle good fellows hanging about the door, and chatting on the sill of the unglazed window; and the dusky Vulcans of the smithy themselves laid aside sledge and bellows to come and gaze out inquisitively at the large open carriage and its cluster of men. But no one approached. The gazers had noted the white belts and *chapeaux bras*, and had no wish to intrude on the police. Those

corbeaux, as the master-smith observed, were birds of bad augury, best let alone.

And now the dull thud of distant horse-hoofs beating upon the frozen snow is heard, and as the tall figures and martial accoutrements of the gendarmes come into sight, the commissary bids the driver proceed. It is but a step to the rusted iron gates of the château. There, every one alights; as they do so, an agent of police steps up and lifts his hand to his hat, in salutation to his superior. 'Anything new, Martin?' The policeman's answer is satisfactory. Nothing has occurred. Every avenue is guarded; the house is surrounded on all sides. All is well. Just as Martin has given his report, the gendarmes ride up, and dismount in leisurely fashion, linking the bridles of their horses together, so that one man may suffice to hold all five of the chargers. The man selected is an agent of police. He is old, and can best be spared when hard knocks are looked for, and he is nothing loath to take this inglorious part in the campaign.

The rusted iron gates proved to be unfastened. Their hinges creaked harshly as they were thrust back; and the gendarmes and police, headed by the magistrate, made their entry into the grounds. With them, but not of them, were Charles Ford, Sergeant Skinner, and M. Durbec. 'Hist! come with me,' said the last named of these three, as he drew the Englishmen aside, speaking at the same time in tolerably good English: 'you need not get yourselves knocked on the head, that I know of, and for me, I wash my hands of the affair. It is theirs; they have drawn the wine—let them drink it. *D'ailleurs*, I have made my proofs. They will not call me coward.'

Then, eking out his statement with shrugs, grins, and gestures more graphic than words, M. Durbec proceeded to explain that he had offered, if he were given *carte blanche*, to make his way by stratagem into the house, and to capture the formidable master of it during his sleep. This wise plan had been overruled; formality had been the order of the day; and M. Durbec had resolved to be a mere spectator of the mischief he anticipated. But scarcely had he ceased to speak, when, to the surprise of every one, in answer to the shrill neighing of one of the gendarmes' horses, a horse neighed loudly from the range of deserted stabling across the neglected court-yard. A general movement took place in that direction, and with no small astonishment the police discovered a carriage stowed away in the roofless coach-house, two horses tethered in the disused stable, and the coachman, a mere lad, with a sheep-skin rug rolled around him, fast asleep on a truss of straw. Awakening to find himself a prisoner, this poor fellow was at first too much surprised to make any reply to the questions of his captors; but presently it came out that he was in the service of a livery stable-keeper of St Germain, that the English gentleman who lived in the château had hired the vehicle and horses of his *patron*, bespeaking them for Monday, at three o'clock; that he, Paul Peter Lobuchean, had been punctual; that M. Royston had told him to wait, as the carriage would not be wanted till after dark, and at the same time had fed him well, and supplied him freely with wine of Spain, after which Paul Peter had gone snugly to sleep upon the straw: and that was all Paul Peter had to tell.

M. Durbec, prince of spies, laughed impishly as

he led Charles Ford and the London detective back to the front of the house, and placed them under the shelter of a clump of lime-trees. 'So, so!' he said softly; 'this good Monsieur Royston would have stolen away, it seems, and left an empty nest. His journey would only have extended to Mantes, or at most to Havre. But now listen: mark what Monsieur le Commissaire is about to do.'

By this time the gravel and the crisp snow were crackling under the tread of many feet; and the commissary, with the smith from St Germain at his left hand, and his secretary on the right, stood in front of the principal door of the château—the door above which the mutilated escutcheon frowned upon the intruders. Every window was dark; all the lower shutters, all those on the first floor as well, were closed. Above, the dormer windows in the steep roof looked blankly out, ink-black and mournful, on the night—no light; no sound; no sign of life. The commissary rang the door-bell, and, lifting the rusty knocker, sent a peal of hollow sounds echoing through the apparently deserted house. The knocking elicited no response. The commissary glanced over his shoulder at the five gendarmes and the agents who stood ready. Then clearing his voice, which was husky and thick with the combined effects of the night-air and the excitement of the moment, the commissary again struck three times upon the oaken door, loudly pronouncing the magic words of the legal open sesame: '*Ouvrez, au nom de la loi!*' The summons was disregarded. The commissary of police turned to his men. 'This is the first *sommation*,' he said in a loud voice. Again the words and the knocking were repeated. 'Open, open, in the name of the law!' but all was dark and silent as the grave.

M. Durbec, under the shadow of the lime-trees, whispered to Charles Ford: 'A nice mess they will make of it; you will see. There was but one way,' he added, with the incomparable fatuity that sits more naturally on a Frenchman than on any other mortal man, 'and that way was to leave all to me.'

'I don't like this,' said Charles Ford hurriedly; 'all these displays of guns and pistols and cold steel against one man. It seems a cowardly butchery. When he shews himself, I will call to him to surrender, and I'll promise him that he and his shall not be hurt, if only'—

'Hark!' hissed out the French detective. 'Monsieur le Commissaire speaks for the last time. "Open, in the name of the law!" The curtain will rise soon, and you shall tell me, *mes amis*, how you fancy the play.'

There was a long pause. The workman from St Germain was getting ready his tools. The night was very bleak; the air was cold and frosty; but the commissary of police took off his hat and wiped his forehead, which was beaded over with heat-drops. Not a man spoke. There was no sound but the faint rattle of arms, or the clink of a spur as one of the gendarmes moved uneasily. The silence was broken by the voice of the commissary, and very harsh and strident was the sound of that voice as it said: 'The third *sommation* has been addressed without obedience being rendered. In virtue of the powers conferred on me by the Criminal Code, I, commissaire de police, command the door to be broken open! To your duty, and burst in the door!'

Instantly the workman thrust the sharp point

of a long crowbar between the door and the jamb nearest to the lock, and drove it home with two strokes of a mallet.

'Help me, comrades,' cried the smith; 'two of you bear a hand, and we'll prize open the door in a twinkling.' Two of those addressed, an agent and a gendarme, laid their hands upon the lever. As they did so, one of the outside shutters of the upper windows was flung open, and two shots were discharged in rapid succession. The jarring of the windows, and the hollow echoes of the successive reports as they rang through the rooms and passages of the house, were such loud and startling interruptions of the previous dead silence, that the nerves of the bravest were affected for the instant. The blue smoke of the firing rolled lazily away, and it was seen that no one was hurt. The excited gendarmes set up a cheer of derision and defiance. M. Durbec shook his head.

'He fired too high,' said the man from the Rue Jérusalem. 'It was done on purpose. He desired to scare them away, if they would take the hint. He will not miss them again, be sure.' And indeed, as those outside worked vigorously with the crowbar to break the fastenings of the door, two more flashes lit up the blackness of the night, and the gendarme who was aiding the smith gave a groan, and dropped the mallet.

'I am wounded, *mon brigadier*!' said the poor fellow, sinking down upon the snow, which was instantly crimsoned with blood. The brigadier sprang forward, sword in hand.

'*Feu! feu! sur les brigands!*' he ordered, pointing to the window above. Instantly, the brass-bound carbines were brought to the shoulder, and a rattling volley was poured into the fatal casement. Shattered glass and broken wood-work fell in a clattering shower upon the frozen snow; but a deep mocking laugh replied to the discharge, and from another window four more shots were fired. The air was filled with smoke. The sharp discharge of firearms seemed continuous; and the shouts of the men without blended with the crash of the breaking door, and with the thundering blows of the mallet upon the panels.

'There are two of them. The Capitaine Royston has his share in the dance also,' said M. Durbec philosophically.

The police behaved well; there was no flinching. Even the commissary, whose vocation was not that of a warrior, stood his ground, and urged those about him to fresh exertions, while such of his followers as had firearms kept up a rapid fusillade upon the windows of the upper story. The shrill screams of women, coming apparently from the highest range of rooms in the gaunt high château, were now plainly to be heard amidst the noise of the assault. The door was fiercely attacked now with crowbar and mallet, chisel, hammer, and hatchet. The old oak flew in splinters, and lock and hinges creaked and bent; but within there was a barricade hastily built up with heavy furniture and logs of firewood, and the task of forcing an entry was no light one. Several more of the police, at the sound of the firing, had come hastily up, and those nearest to the door worked with a will. They were in a savage humour now. Between rage and fear, their blood was at fever-heat. Three or four of them had received slight wounds, besides the serious injury received by the first man who had been hit. The bullets spattered

like hail upon the gravel; but the smoke grew thicker every moment.

The door was now breached in several places; the hinges had been torn away; the lock and bolts scooped and grated harshly as they were bent back, and the whole framework seemed parting to pieces.

'Push, push hard, *ferme et fort!*' cried the brigadier Leroux, encouraging his men. His own hat had been perforated by a ball. He was bare-headed, and the blood was trickling down his face where a stray shot had grazed his left temple; but he was hardly conscious of the trifling hurt. 'Together, my lads!' As the words were uttered, a twin stream of flame spouted forth from one of the gaps in the door, and a tall gendarme put his hand to his side, and staggered back among his comrades, then fell prone upon the bloody snow.

'Art much hurt, Norman, *mon enfant?*' asked the brigadier, stooping over him.

'It was *à bout portant*. I think I have my *paquet* made up for the other world, *mon brigadier*. It is a *congé* in full, gasped the poor soldier, trying to smile. Half maddened at the sight, the rest of the party rushed at the door, and by a combined effort, tore it down, and forced their way inwards, firing as they went, and scrambling pell-mell over the ruins of the barricade. After them, drawn as iron by a magnet, rushed in Charles Ford, followed by Durbee and Sergeant Skinner, and the paved hall of the château was crowded in a moment. The commissary, less active than his subordinates, had been left behind the others, and it was Leroux who took the lead, sabre in hand. The two remaining gendarmes and nine or ten of the ordinary police were at his heels. The whole affair resembled the storming of a fort rather than a common arrest. M. Durbee caught hold of Charles Ford, and held him back, pointing upwards with a warning gesture of mute horror doubly impressive from such a man.

On the landing-place above them, at the head of the broad staircase of fair white stone, bordered by a massive bronze balustrade, to which some scraps of gold-leaf clung yet, relics of its old splendour, stood Brand Royston, towering through the sickly haze of the smoke which the firing had raised. He looked more like a giant than a man of the common human standard, as he stood there, with his fierce bull-eyes glaring bloodshot, his face livid and swarthy with passion, and his hands blackened with powder. His double-barrelled gun lay at his feet, and he was grasping a small wooden keg, hooped with copper, to which he was deliberately attaching a slow match, the lighted end of which glowed red through the smoke. With a threatening gesture, he poised this burden aloft, holding it above his head, at the full stretch of his huge arms.

'See this!' he said, in a deep low tone that hardly rose above a whisper, terrible in its distinctness. 'Come a step nearer, one step, and I'll not die without sending some of you to the devil before me!'

That the barrel contained gunpowder, there could be no doubt. That the madman, or the goaded desperado, for he might have been either, so frightful were the angry passions that distorted his countenance, would keep his word, there was no doubt. All shrank back. '*A terre! à terre!*' cried a frightened voice; and most of those present

fell upon their faces, and lay grovelling on the pavement.

'*That won't save you!*' was the savage taunt of their enemy, and there was an insane glitter in his eyes. Perhaps he was really mad at that moment, or it may have been merely the desperate desire to avenge himself in the last struggle that prompted his horrible design. The screams of the women overhead, '*Au secours! help us!*' grew shriller than before. A few of the boldest men in the hall remained erect—the brigadier foremost. Sergeant Skinner had thrown himself into a small unfurnished room, the door of which was ajar, and had dragged Charles after him. It was safer there than the hall would be when the deadly grenade should explode. M. Durbee knelt on one knee, thrust his hand into the breast of his coat, and fixed his eyes on the gigantic form above him. All this passed very quickly.

The brigadier was the first to recover from the stupor of surprise. Calling on his men to follow him, he pointed to the staircase, and set his foot on the lowest step, making the sign of the cross as he did so.

'One step more!' hissed forth Brand Royston, swinging back the dreadful load in his strong hands. The brave soldier continued to advance. Already the powder-keg was poised for the fatal cast, and in another moment it would have been hurled into the hall, when M. Durbee's hand, with a pistol in it, was drawn forth from the breast of his coat, a sharp report followed, and Brand Royston, shot through the forehead, fell with a crash upon the floor, the heavy keg rolling upon the landing-place. Quick as thought, Leroux rushed up the stairs to extinguish the match before the powder should ignite. Too late.

A vivid, blinding flash of fierce white light, a shock at which the very earth seemed to tremble, and at whose touch the stout stone walls of the château shook like the flimsy pasteboard of a child's house of cards, while beams snapped in twain, ceilings fell in a cloud of lime and horse-hair, and the rattle of tumbling joists, laths, rafters, slates, and masonry, mingled with the awful roar of the explosion. Every window in the house, glass, wood, lead, iron and all, was blown out, and fell tinkling on the snow. The doors burst open as if some Titan's hand had thrust them from their fastenings. The roof bore the blow better than could have been predicated of it by mortal architect. But the upper staircase of wood fell in ruins, the grand staircase of stone was shattered and disjointed, brigadier Leroux rolling down in break-neck fashion, along with an avalanche of stones and mortar, and the shrieks of the women at the top of the house died away in a drear silence.

On the first floor, where the powder had exploded, the mischief was at the worst. Below, except for the fact that every one had been thrown down, that some bruises had been inflicted by the falling wood and plaster, and that the brigadier had been hurled back, with aching bones, among his comrades, no harm was effected. And now that the walls had ceased to vibrate, all fear of being buried alive died out in the hearts of the bystanders. But as the thick smoke cleared away, it was seen that the walls above were blown away, leaving a gap as if Big Will from Shoeburyness had been placed in battery against the Château des Roches. The panels were sullenly smouldering, and a curtain

that yet hung to an iron rod was in a light flame, and sparks and burning wood were everywhere. The shrieking of female voices on the attic story, hushed for a few minutes, now broke out again with redoubled force.

'You saved all our lives!' said Charles Ford, as he took the hand of M. Durbec, and wrung it hard; and several of those in the hall came swarming about the door of the little ante-room, loud in their praise of the detective's presence of mind and unerring aim. But M. Durbec received these praises rather coldly, and he made haste to replace the yet smoking pistol in his breast-pocket.

'I always said, *mon commissaire*, that the plan was none of mine. I do assure you that it went against me to *caramboler* that *pauvre diable* there—but who can escape his fate!'

Outside the house, piled in ruin over the frozen snow, lay scorched beams and lumps of broken masonry, and riven panels of costly carved wood, and fragments of furniture. There they lay, ghastly and confused, beneath the pale stars; and amongst the ruins lay a blackened corpse, burned and torn out of all semblance to humanity. It was a fit ending to such a life as Brand Royston's.

And now, as the smoke and the scent of burning wood filled the house, the screams of the poor creatures above became more piteous in their terror. Their piercing cries rang wildly through the passages, and made the roof resound. 'Help, help!' they cried; '*au secours*, for the love of Heaven. Fire! the château is on fire. Help us, good Christians, or we shall be burned here too. Help, help! *à l'incendie*!' It was sad to hear them.

CHAPTER XXXII.—UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

The Château des Roches was really on fire; of that, the flakes of half-consumed wood, dropping like a fiery snow-shower from the first-floor landing-place—the sparks that were scattered at each gust of the cold wind that had now free entry into the dismantled house—and the pungent smoke, afforded proofs sufficient. But no one doubted but that the fire could easily be checked, if only access could be obtained to the upper stories of the building. The grand stairs were broken up, and the slabs of hewn stone, piled upon one another like the boulders in a rugged *moraine* among the glaciers of Switzerland, threatened to give way beneath the rash foot that should touch them. Above, matters were even worse. The narrow wooden staircase that led up to that part of the house which was occupied by the servants, had been shattered by the explosion, and the wreck of the half-rotten timber looked like the remains of some vessel that has been broken up among the sharp-toothed rocks of a lee-shore.

To gain the upper floor, whence the screams proceeded, was impossible, except by the aid of a ladder; and as there were none at hand, there was reason to fear that the flames might gather head, fanned by the strong wind, and that the unhappy women above might be burned or suffocated before their rescue could be effected. In this strait, the apparition of a number of the country-people was indeed welcome; and when once the peasants understood the urgency of the appeal for aid, they shewed no slackness in rendering it. The repeated discharge of the firearms, coupled

with the arrival of the gendarmerie, had caused much excitement in the village, and when the roar of the explosion was heard, a crowd began to hurry towards the château. Then the cry that stirs every heart, and to which the most selfish can scarcely be deaf—the cry of 'Fire!'—spread from lip to lip, and the bells of the village church rang the tocsin, carrying the alarm far over the frost-bound country.

Ladders were brought in hot haste; a chain of men was formed, stretching from the brook-side to the door of the château, and buckets of water, hastily scooped up from holes broken in the ice, were passed along from hand to hand. The brigadier and the police, forgetting their bruises and wounds, set an example of hard work to the good-natured blouse-clad husbandmen; and the commissary, with his cool presence of mind, proved useful in directing those about him. Charles Ford worked as hard as any of them; he and Sergeant Skinner were the first volunteers who mounted the ladders through the stifling clouds of smoke. Plenty of brave men were ready to follow them; and the pails of water were drawn up, and emptied upon the smouldering wood-work, and though the serpent of fire reared his red head, and writhed and fought, as if unwilling to be balked of his prey, the house was saved. The fire was got under; the charred boards hissing and sputtering like Medusa's snakes, and the steam and vapour rising in clouds. Not too soon; the flames were fastening on the wreck of the upper staircase, and, had they once mounted to the roof, nothing could have prevented the loss of life now happily averted.

Clambering up, by the help of a ladder hauled by ropes, to the scanty platform which alone represented the once stately landing-place, several adventurers reached the attic story, and the screams of the women guided them to the right door. That door proved to be locked on the outside, and the key was in the lock. A tough door it was, made of seasoned elm, and clamped with iron, or Grosse Jeanne, whose stout arms and large-knuckled hands were bruised and bleeding with their owner's frantic efforts to break her prison, would have torn it open. The two women who had screamed were Grosse Jeanne, the cook, housemaid, and factotum of the Royston family, and her aide-de-camp and satellite, La Petite. Both females were in a pitiable condition of terror and excitement; their voices were hoarse with screaming, and their faces were wet with tears. They continued to shriek as they were assisted to descend the ladders, and became hysterical on reaching the hall.

The commissary was the most active of men. So long as it was needful to fight the fire, the worthy magistrate had been zealous in the work; but no sooner had the joyous vociferations of the men above borne witness that the danger was past, than the secretary spread out his supply of stationery on a table in the *salle-à-manger*, while M. le Commissaire prepared for the inevitable ceremony of drawing up the *procès-verbal*. In England, hysterical Grosse Jeanne and the weeping handmaid who did her bidding would, in right of their agitation, have been exempt from questioning. Not so on the present occasion. The commissary merely said, in a querulous tone: '*Assez—assez de bruit comme ça!* Your names, Christian names, age, domicile, and occupations, if you please.

Allons! no more crying! the interrogations must be replied to in categorical order.

And the excited females became in a moment as meek as lambs, and answered the commissary's questions one by one, while the clerk's pen went rapidly scratching over the paper. For the present, however, and before M. le Procureur Impérial and M. the Judge of Instruction should take them in hand, Jeanne Marguerite Pomponnier, dite Grosse Jeanne, age thirty-two, native of the commune of Pecq, servant; and Marie Pichard, dite La Petite, age nineteen, native of the commune of Grèsnèz-les-cloches, had not much to relate. Their master—of whom they spoke with dread, even now that they knew him to be lying dead in the garden without—had locked them up in that room at the hour of sunset. He had forbidden them to make any noise, and they had obeyed, until the sounds of combat grew too terrific for feminine nerves, and then they had screamed. They had screamed more afterwards, when the fear of being grilled, 'like a chestnut on a shovel,' according to the cook's professional simile, had been added to their former fears of powder and ball.

But before the serving-women had finished their statements, fresh captives were forthcoming. In a room on the first floor, the door of which was approached with no slight difficulty, two persons were found—Mrs Royston and her son. The humble household drudge, wife, and now widow, of Rattling Brand Royston, was found crouching in a great elbow-chair, with an old India shawl, that had perhaps made part of her costly trousseau in the far-off days when the daughter of the York alderman married the young squire, wrapped round her head. She seemed trying to shut out all the horrid sounds and sights of that terrible night. As for Basil Royston, he looked fitter, with his pale cheeks and emaciated figure, to be in a hospital bed than to take part in an affray. His late illness had shaken him morally and physically. He stood in the middle of the room, trembling and crestfallen, and when the police entered, the cashiered captain held out his hands to receive the irons with perfect docility.

'I surrender myself,' he said; 'but, Messieurs, I had nothing to do with it. It was all my father's doing. He is so headstrong that he would have his way.' It must be remembered that at this time the young man did not know that his father was dead. The gendarme to whom he gave himself up whistled contemptuously as he clasped the handcuffs on the prisoner's wrists.

'I don't think this *poule mouillée* had much to do with the skirmish,' he said. However, a search soon brought to light a double-barrelled fowling-piece that had been hidden in a corner, under a curtain. This weapon had silver mountings, the Royston crest on its stock, and beneath it the initials B. R., which would apply equally to father and son. But that the piece had been recently fired, there was no doubt. A white handkerchief thrust into the muzzle was blackened with burnt powder; one barrel was still charged, and that with ball, and a number of bullets and a powder-flask were discovered in Basil's pockets. Evidently, he had taken some share in the late resistance.

'Where,' he asked confusedly, as he was led away—'where is my father?'

The brigadier, a good-hearted soldier, hesitated to reply. But one of the agents was less considerate.

'Your *scellérat* of a father,' he exclaimed coarsely—'*va!* he has got change for his money, I can tell you that. Shot like a dog, the *gros Anglais*.'

Mrs Royston gave a cry of real anguish, and tried to push her way through the group of police who were conducting her, not ungently, from the room. 'Let me go!' she cried; 'let me go to him! My husband dead? O Brand, Brand, speak to me; tell me it is not true!' All the squire's faults, all the long years of hard usage and tyranny, were forgotten in a moment, and no model of human virtues could have been mourned more sincerely than Brand Royston by her who only remembered that he was the husband of her youth. The commissary, when the widow was brought into his presence, respected her grief, and forbore to torment her with questions.

'She will have enough to bear later, *pauvre dame*,' he mumbled to himself between two pinches of snuff. Even a commissary of police, in that country where the logic of law demands that all possibly guilty persons should prove their innocence, could not see much harm in Elizabeth Royston.

That was but a melancholy procession which took its way homeward to the good town of St Germain. Two of the strong horses that belonged to the gendarmerie went riderless back, led by the bridle, and with empty saddles. One gendarme, whose shattered knee-joint wrung a groan of pain from the wounded man at every jolt of the cart in which he lay, was slowly removed to the town. As for the poor fellow who had been shot down in the act of forcing open the door, he had proved but too true a prophet in taking a gloomy view of his own case: he had died from inward bleeding, long before the fire was extinguished. Stiff and stark, the soldier who had ridden forth from the streets of St Germain a few hours before, lay wrapped in his blue cavalry-cloak upon a table in the dilapidated saloon of the Château des Roches. Beside him, covered with a ragged sheet, borrowed from a neighbouring cottage, lay the mutilated body of Rattling Brand Royston. Death, like poverty, makes men acquainted with strange bed-fellows. Had any magician possessed the power, in the heyday of youth, to shew Brand Royston that goal to his career, his own disfigured carcass lying beside the body of a French gendarme, perhaps the evil man might have been awed into repentance. It was a strange ending for a man who had touched his glass of sherry with that of a royal duke, and who had walked Bond Street with nobles for his companions, and every shopkeeper cringing for his custom. But the poor gendarme had the best of it. He died in doing his duty, and with a smile upon his lips. Brand— But why speak of it?

They took the prisoners home. They were all prisoners—the widow and son of the dead Englishman; the servant who was only too ready, when once she should have rallied her wool-gathering wits, to tell all she knew, and perhaps more; and the simple wench who had looked on Grosse Jeanne as her mentor, and who had few original ideas to be ventilated in her coming examination by M. le Procureur Impérial. All who had been found in that ill-fated house, including the young driver of the hired carriage, were to be detained until they should have fully satisfied the authorities on all points.

'There is one person missing,' such were the

commissary's words, as he drove slowly homewards under the waning stars—'a member of the family, a demoiselle, niece, or cousin to few Royston. I have her name written here—Adèle—ay, Adela Burt. But she was not in the house, that is certain. Where is she, then? Where is Adela Burt?'

A VANISHING RACE.

THE residence of Captain C. F. Hall in the arctic regions, and his explorations among the solemn and majestic wastes surrounded by the 'hyperborean seas,' have invested the Esquimaux with a degree of interest which they had never previously excited. The savage inhabitants of the more beautiful and fertile regions of the earth have been observed by travellers with close and careful attention, which leads to hopeful efforts for their civilisation. As the map of the world is opened up to our comprehension, new schemes and prospects for the advance of the human race are opened with it; *savants*, artists, missionaries, merchants, gird themselves to the contest with the material and moral conditions of the peoples, yet, though the world's day has lasted so long, in their infancy, whose unknown future may contain histories as brilliant as those of the civilisations of the present and the past. But there is a race who have not excited such hopes, who have not given rise to such exertions—a race whose life of unimaginable hardship gives them a mysterious resemblance to the phantoms of mythological belief, and places them beyond the reach of the sympathies of civilisation by its physical conditions, the amelioration of which is impossible. Beyond the stern barrier which Nature has set in the northernmost part of her awful realm, behind the terrible rampart of snow and ice, and storm and darkness, these creatures of her wrath, rather than of her bounty, dwell. To reach their land, the traveller must leave behind him every familiar object, and abandon every habit or need of ordinary life. He must bid farewell to green trees, to fertile fields, to the crops which give food to man and beast, to the domestic animals, to every mode of conveyance, to every implement of common use, to food and clothing such as even the poorest and the roughest sons of a less terrible clime may command; to the thousand voices of Nature, even in its secluded nooks.

It is a mockery to speak of the arctic regions as the land of the Esquimaux, for nowhere on the earth is man less sovereign. Here Nature is indeed grand beyond conception, but also terrible, implacable, and impenetrable. She sets man aside in her awful scorn; he is a thing of no moment, a cumberer of the ice-fields, learning the simple lessons whereby he supports his squalid existence from the brutes, which are lordlier than he, inasmuch as the ice-slavery is no chain of servitude to them; and heedless of him, of his terrible hunger and destitution, of his hopeless isolation, she builds her ice-palaces upon the seas, and locks the land in her glittering ice-chains, and flings her terrific banners of flame wide against the northern sky; and sends her voice abroad, without a tone of pity in its vibrations, sounding through the troubled depths of the waters, and the rent masses of the many-tinted icebergs. Nature is indeed beautiful in her northern strongholds, but her beauty shews only its terrible aspects, its dread grandeur. The

face of the mighty mother does not soften into a smile for the feebleness of her youngest-born offspring, but is fixed in its awful sublimity. There is no point of contact between this ice-kingdom and European civilisation, and men of our race and tongue shrink from it with an appalled sadness, for has it not been the tomb of many of our brave and beloved? Three centuries ago, it earned that evil reputation, which, in the then elementary state of geographical knowledge, and the general prevalence of superstition, assumed a weird and baleful form. It has but increased in degree, though differing in kind, in our days, and we think of the Arctic Regions as the sepulchre of the beloved dead, the land towards which the heart of England yearned, and which kept pitiless silence through long years of hope deferred. But of its people we do not think; we are satisfied to have but a vague notion of them; to wonder, amid the many marvels of that mighty problem—the distribution of the human race—how human beings ever found their way to those dreadful fastnesses, more cruel in their exaction of human suffering than the desert and the forest. This indifference gives way when we learn what manner of people these are whom we call Esquimaux, a word which signifies 'eaters of raw food,' but who call themselves *Inuit*, or 'the people,' and explain their own origin by a story which is a pleasing testimony to the common possession of self-conceit by all nations. They say that the Creator made white men first, but was dissatisfied with them, regarded them as worthless unfinished creatures, and straightway set about making the Inuit people, who proved perfectly satisfactory.

Captain Hall lived among this strange race for two years and a half, and he is about to return and prosecute his researches in Boothia and King William's Land. This time, his object is to trace the remnants of the Franklin expedition, which—as he finds the history of the few events which have ever marked the progress of time in that distant land handed down by oral tradition with extraordinary distinctness—he has no doubt of being able to do. His first journey was in search of relics of the Frobiisher expedition, and was as successful as it was daring, patient, and persevering. His experiences were strange in all respects, and in many most revolting; but we owe much to this cheerful, courageous, simple-hearted American gentleman, who has revealed the Esquimaux to us, as Captain Grant has revealed the African tribes, and oriental tourists the dwellers in the deserts. There is poetical harmony in the stern conditions of life among the Inuits; there is the impress of sadness and of sterility upon them all. Time itself changes its meaning in a land where

The sun starts redly up
To shine for half a year,

and dim wintry twilight lasts throughout the other half, and hunger is the normal state of the people. The traveller's route is to be traced on the map, which is mere guess-work hitherto, up the western side of Davis's Strait; and once away from Holsteinborg, the journey assumes all its savage features. The terrible icebergs rear their menacing masses in the track of the ship; the sun pours its beams upon them, and bathes them in golden light; they appear in fantastic shapes of Gothic cathedral,

of battlemented tower, of clear single-pierced spire, of strong fenced city, of jewel-mountain, of vast crystal hills; and so, as the voyager leaves art and civilisation behind, their most supreme forms flash a mirage-like reminiscence upon him, intensifying the contrast of the prospect, and luring him to a frantic and futile regret.

A grand and terrible confusion reigns around; the voyager shrinks from the overwhelming scene, where ranges of mountains, islands, rocks, castles, huge formless masses, and gorgeous prismatic lights surround that labouring speck upon the mystic sea, of whose littleness he is so small an atom; and a strange sense, which is not fear, but awe, comes to him with the knowledge that nothing of this sublime confusion is real, on the horizon or beyond it. For all the time of his stay in the arctic regions he is to be surrounded by contradictions, by the sublimest manifestations of nature, by the lowest conditions of humanity, by gorgeous and majestic optical delusions, and by the hardest and most grovelling facts of daily existence; he must share, to their fullest extent, the relentless physical needs of the people, and live, if he would live at all, in close contact with them, and yet his solitude must be inwardly profound and unapproachable; his purposes unintelligible to his associates; and their language, elementary in itself, dimly and scantily comprehended by him even in its most sparing forms. All this, without any of the alleviations of life among savages in southern countries—without the warmth, which, if sometimes oppressive, is ordinarily grateful—without the rich and genial beauties of nature—without the resources of sport—without the natural fruits of the earth—without the intellectual occupation of speculating upon development, of ascertaining capabilities, or of investigating sources of wealth. The civilised dweller in arctic regions has none of these. He beholds, with admiration so solemn as to be painful, the unapproachable dignity and hard implacable stillness of Nature; but he never dreams of treasure to be wrested from the cells of the ice-prison; he seeks the dead—the dead of centuries ago—the dead of a decade since, to be found, it may be, incorporated with their frozen resting-place; for the fiat of Nature arrests decay in these terrible regions, where death and life are always at close grips with one another. While the mind is ceaselessly impressed with sadness and solemnity, the body asserts its claim to superiority; it will not be forgotten or neglected, for cold encompasses it with unrelaxing menace of death, and hunger preys upon the vitals, whose heat wanes rapidly in the pitiless climate, and which crave for the nutriment so hard to procure, so repulsive when procured.

Toil is the law of the ice-clad land—toil, not to wrest from the bosom of the earth her children's sustenance, but to tear from the amphibious creatures, from whom they have learned how to shelter themselves from the cold, and whose skins cover them, the unctuous flesh, which they devour raw, in enormous quantities. The Inuit are, on the whole, a gentle people, driven by the relentless need and severity of their lives into close and peaceful companionship. They have no king, no government, no law, no defined religion, no property; they have, for all these, custom—the oldest law; they are animated by the same spirit that dictated the reply once made to One who sat by Jacob's well: 'Our

fathers worshipped in this mountain, and we worship.' As 'the old Innuits' did, so do their successors. They have no bread, no medicine, no household furniture; they are poor human waifs upon the wide white bosom of the frozen seas; and they have no help or resource but in the seal, the walrus, the white bear, the reindeer, and the wonderful Esquimaux dogs, which are by far the noblest living creatures in all those sterile wastes. From the seal they have learned to make the *igloo*, which is the house of the Inuit. They eat the flesh of this animal, and drink its fresh warm blood; they kill its young, and eagerly swallow the milk of the mother, found in the stomach of the baby seal. When the sudden summer comes, and the snow melts, and leaves the surface of the ice bare, they are houseless; the *igloo* melts away; their home is but of frozen water, and suddenly it disappears. Then they have recourse to the *tupic*, which is a huge sheet of skins hung across a horizontal pole, supported at either end. Their bed is a snow platform, strewn with the moss which is the reindeer's food, and covered with skins. Their choicest dainties are the fat of the *tuktoo*, or reindeer, the marrow procured by mashing the bones of the legs, and the thick, white, unctuous lining of the whale-hide.

The interior of an *igloo* presents a picture more repulsive than that of any African hut or Indian wigwam, more distressing to human feelings, and degrading to human pride. The *igloo* is a dome-shaped building, made of ice-blocks, with an aperture in the roof, and a rude doorway at one side, closed with ice-blocks, when the inmates are assembled. The snow platform which forms the bed is occupied by the women and the stranger. Men and women are clad in skins, put together with neatness and ingenuity. The dress of the sexes differs only in two particulars; that of the women is furnished with a long tail, depending from the jacket, and has a sort of hood, in which loads and children are carried. The life of the infant is preserved by its naked body being kept in contact with that of the mother. One household implement they possess—it is a stone lamp; something like a trough, with a deep groove in it, in which the dried moss, used as wick, floats in the seal oil, expressed by the teeth of the women from lumps of blubber, which they patiently 'milk' until the precious unguent is all procured. But this lamp too often fails them, and darkness and hunger take up frequent abode with the Inuit. Days and nights are passed by the men, sitting singly, in death-like stillness and silence, by the hole which they have found, far under the snow, at which the seal will 'blow.' It is strange and terrible to think of those watches, in the midst of the desolation, under that arctic sky, with the cold dense fog now swooping, now lifting, in the enforced stillness, with famine gnawing the watcher, and famine at home in the *igloo*, and the chance of food depending on the sureness of one instantaneous stroke, down through the snow, through the narrow orifice in the ice, into the throat of the animal with the sleek skin, and the mournful human eyes, which vainly implore mercy from raging hunger.

When the Inuit brings the seal to the *igloo*, a crowd invades the narrow space, for the simplest hospitality prevails, and the long watch, the skilful stroke do not constitute sole ownership of the

prize. The skin is stripped off the huge unsightly carcass, and a horrible scene ensues. The flesh is torn or cut with the stone knives in large lumps, and having been first licked by the women, to remove any hairs or other adhesive matter, is distributed to the party, and devoured raw; the blood is drunk, the bones are mashed, the entrails are greedily eaten, the dogs sharing in all; and the blubber is made to yield its oil by the disgusting process already described. One turns silenced from the picture; from the sights, and sounds, and scents; from the vision of dark faces, eager with gluttonous longing, gathered round the red, flaring light; from the skin-clothed bodies, reeking with grease and filth, and the foul exhalations of the mutilated animal; from the lumps of flesh torn by savage hands, and crammed dripping into distended mouths; from the steaming blood, and the human creatures who rapturously quaff it in the presence of the white man, who sits among them and feeds with them, whose heart yearns with dumb compassion for them, who has wonderful scientific instruments in his pockets, and his Bible in his breast. As the seal teaches the Innuits the art of housing themselves, so the white bear teaches them how to kill the walrus, their most plentiful and frequent food, when the ice is drifting, and the unwieldy creatures lie upon the blocks close in-shore; then the bear climbs the overhanging precipice, and taking a heavy block in his deft forepaws, he hurls it with rare skill and nicety of aim upon the basking monster below. So brutes train men in those dreadful regions, and not men brutes. The life of the Innuits is full of such contradictions. And their deaths? From the contemplation of these one turns away appalled, for they die in utter solitude.

When Captain Hall first heard of this horrible custom, he started off at once to see its truth; and having removed the blocks with which the doorway had been built up, entered an igloo, and found a woman who had yet many days to linger thus fastened up in her living tomb. Again, hearing that a woman had been abandoned to die, at a great distance, he set forth, and having reached the spot with immense difficulty and danger, he managed to remove the snow and the block which closed the hole in the top of the igloo, lowered himself into it, and found the woman dead, and frozen as hard as her bier and her tomb, with a sweet serene smile upon the marble face. So this is the close of a life of toil and privation—the withdrawal of every kindred face, the fearful solitude of the ice-walls, the terrible arctic darkness and silence, and the frozen corpse lying unshrouded, naked, beneath the frozen skins, until the Resurrection. Surely the angel of death is an angel of mercy there, and does his errand gently, bearing away the lonely, terrified spirit to the city of gold, the gates of pearl, the jasper sea, the land where there is no darkness, physical or mental, for evermore. The earth, always pitiless to them, which never feeds them from her bosom, does not suffer her dead children of the Innuït people to sleep their last sleep in her lap. Their graves are only blocks of ice piled around and above the corpses, which remain unharmed, unless when the blocks melt, as they sometimes do, and the wolves, dogs, or bears gain access to the frozen remains. The Innuits are dying out; disease is making havoc among them; consumption, formerly unknown, is thinning their

numbers by its slow, furtive, murderous advance; their children are few, and fewer still are reared; and the long story of awful desolation draws to a close. Who can regret it? Who can do aught but desire that the giant wastes of the arctic regions should be left to the soulless creatures of God; that the great discord between them and human life has ceased to trouble the harmony of creation; that the mystery of such an existence is quietly laid at rest, among the things which 'we know not now, but which we shall know hereafter.'

THE CATHEDRAL QUARRY.

A *lonely* spot, where brambles cling,
With thorny arch and crimsoned leaf;
On ash-tree tops, where black-birds sing,
A song unstained by human grief;
Where fretted fern grows thick and close
(A covert for the rabbit); where
Blooms best June's flower, the sweet, wild rose,
Dissolving in the summer air,
Its short-lived beauty, frail as fair.
Here hazel-rods grow tall and pliant;
And here the oak-tree, stubborn giant,
Writhes its Briarean, snakey arms,
Defying thunder and all harms;
Yet, gentle even in its strength,
Shelters beneath its shadowy length
A world of little violet flowers,
That, warmed by sun, and fed by showers,
Gladden the pleasant April hours.

Yet here, long centuries ago,
Came sturdy men, with heaving blow,
And wrench of iron cramp and bar,
To force the stone that went to rear
The great Cathedral, year by year,
Until it shone out like a star.
From hence came buttress, shaft, and stair
From crypt and vaulting rising fair;
And all that slender steeple too,
That like a fountain in the blue
Rises exulting; here the branch
Of the great windows, dyed with blood
Of martyrs that no time can stanch;
The altar and the by-gone rood;
The mullions, drip-stones, and the shrine;
The pavement, long since trod away;
And saints that in their long array
Wait patient for the judgment-day;
And angels that still gazing smile
Upon the abbot in the aisle,
Who on the flat tomb lies in prayer.
The kindred stone still slumbers there
Unheeded and unglorified,
Save when with sunset splendour dyed,
Glistening with rain, by moonshine whitened,
Ermined with winter's soft deep snow,
When storms and tempests rage and blow;
Or with the sparkling hoar-frost brightened,
Padded with velvet moss, and fringed,
With lichen many-coloured tinged.
Yet better be the quiet stone
Lying unnoticed and alone
Beneath the hazel's dancing shade,
Than raised far from its native glade
To brave the storm and mock the lightning;
For here, too, fall the sunbeams brightening;
And ages hence, this stone may shine
Reared up in some diviner shrine.

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